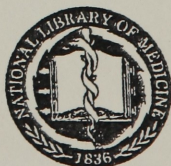


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The Country Physician!

AN ADDRESS

UPON THE

LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF THE LATE

DR. FREDERICK DORSEY,

OF WASHINGTON COUNTY, MARYLAND,

DELIVERED IN THE LUTHERAN CHURCH, AT HAGERSTOWN,

BY

JOHN THOMSON MASON.

SECOND EDITION.

BALTIMORE:

PRINTED BY WILLIAM K. BOYLE.

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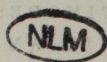
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ENTERED, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1867,
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INTRODUCTION.

AT the solicitation of others, the author has consented to offer to the public a second edition of his address upon the life and character of DR. DORSEY, with some additions.

The first edition was intended exclusively for private circulation, but such was the demand for it, for general perusal, that it has been determined to republish the address.

The profits, if there should be any, arising from the sale of the new edition, will be devoted exclusively to benevolent purposes, and therefore, in purchasing the work, the public, and especially the friends of the deceased, will not only secure a memorial of him, but will at the same time contribute directly to the cause of benevolence.

No encomium upon the address will be attempted, except a reference to extracts from some of the complimentary notices of it, by the public prints and by individuals, and which, by permission of the author, are subjoined.

From "Baltimore Sun."

"An address upon the life and character of the late Dr. Frederick Dorsey, of Washington Co., Md., delivered in the Lutheran Church at Hagerstown, by John Thomson Mason. We have read this 'address' with unusual interest. Though relating to a man of whose life and character we knew nothing before, it has presented in engaging and attractive phases the habits, the mind and all the qualities of an original, remarkable, benevolent and worthy man. The style of the address, its simple, unpretending, unadorned yet graceful phraseology also contribute greatly to the entertainment and gratification of the reader."

From the "Frederick Union."

ADDRESS OF HON. JOHN THOMSON MASON UPON THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF THE LATE DR. FREDERICK DORSEY, OF WASHINGTON CO., MD.—We are indebted to a kind friend for a pamphlet copy of the address delivered by Hon. John Thomson Mason, upon the life and character of the late Dr. Frederick Dorsey, of Washington County, in the Lutheran Church at Hagerstown, on Thursday, the 17th of March last. We read the address with a great deal of interest, as every one will who is permitted to read the first page, and were much pleased with it. Judge Mason has narrated the prominent incidents of the life and character of that truly great and good man, Dr. Dorsey, in a very interesting and attractive manner, and the address must have been delivered in the Judge's usual felicitous style.

Extract from a letter from Bishop Whittingham.

BALTIMORE, *May 16th*, 1859.

Dear Sir:—I find your address on the life and character of the late Dr. Dorsey among a multitude of other papers and publications claiming my attention, on my late return from a Visitation.

A rapid glance at its contents assures me how much we are indebted for the loving minuteness and fidelity,

and great ability with which you have seized and portrayed the remarkable characteristics of our departed and lamented friend. * * * *

With my sincere thanks for the gratification derived from the perusal of your unusually interesting and instructive eulogy, and for the compliment of its reception, for which I suppose myself indebted to your kindness, I am, respectfully and truly,

Your friend and servant, W. R. WHITTINGHAM.

From the late Judge Pendleton.

MARTINSBURG, VA., May 18, 1859.

My Dear Sir:—Your address on the life and character of Dr. Dorsey, has accidentally fallen into my hands long enough for a hasty perusal.

It is so interesting for its *matter*, and so excellent in its *manner*, according to all my taste and judgment, that I greatly desire to read it again and preserve a copy of it. Have you one to spare?

Hastily, with great regard,

Your friend and servant, PHIL. C. PENDLETON.

From the late Otho Scott, Esq.

BEL AIR, June 21, 1859.

Dear Sir:—I received a copy of your address upon Dr. Dorsey, and read it with a great deal of interest. He was a remarkable man, and I think you have done justice to him and credit to yourself. * * * *

From Chief Justice Bowie.

ANNAPOLIS, 4th March, 1867.

My Dear Judge: I am very much obliged by your recollection of my random remark, and the unexpected pleasure you have conferred, in showing me you had appropriated and improved the subject.

The old man of the mountain will live long after his mortal career has closed, in the memoir you have made

of his unwearied activity in doing good, and the salient points of his character.

I had no adequate idea of the extended field of his usefulness, until I read your address. He is entitled to a place among the benefactors of the State. He was evidently an instrument of Providence in planting the valley and filling the waste.

Such examples should not be lost. The picture is worth preserving, both for its subject and its setting. You have studded the portrait with many admirable sentiments and reflections, which should be preserved in a more permanent form.

If you have leisure, you might well republish it as a contribution to the biography of the eminent and useful men of Maryland.

With great regard, very truly, yours,

RICHARD J. BOWIE.

HON. JNO. THOMSON MASON.

From Rev. Dr. Lord, of Miss.

VICKSBURG, *May 25th*, 1859.

My Dear Sir: I have received and, but for absence from home, should have before acknowledged your admirable address upon the life and character of the late Dr. Frederick Dorsey. My acquaintance with him was not long, but it was intimate. I knew him sufficiently well to appreciate your graphic and life-like sketch of his character. I possess, myself, one reminiscence of him which is too good to be lost. At the funeral of Col. Wm. Fitzhugh, Dr. Dorsey and myself (in accordance with the old custom which makes it the office of the clergyman and the physician to precede and, as it were, conduct the body to the grave) were in the carriage which immediately preceded the hearse. Dr. Dorsey, in the kindness of his heart, had invited a young Presbyterian, or rather, I think, German Reformed clergyman, who had recently taken up his abode in Hagerstown, to take a seat with us in the carriage. The young gentleman, however, did not know Dr. Dorsey, and asking me, *sotto voce*, who the old gentleman was, I took occasion to

introduce him. "Hum, ha!" said the clergyman, eyeing the Doctor from the long black weed on his battered hat to his cow-hide shoes, (perhaps the identical pair you refer to in your address,) and scrutinizing his grey coat and much worn inexpressibles as if he sought some clue to the social and professional *status* of the Doctor, "He-e-m, lately settled here, I suppose—have not heard of you before." How this happened I do not know, as the young gentleman had been in Hagerstown I think about three weeks. The old Doctor stood or rather sat literally aghast. An unusual thing for him; he was nonplussed. He grew a little pale, his lower jaw slightly dropped, his eye wandered for a moment and then rested on mine as if to seek for an explanation, or it might be, to ascertain my opinion in regard to the sanity of the young man before him. The clergyman, receiving no answer, repeated, "Recently come to Hagerstown, I suppose?" The Doctor was still silent, and seemed plunged in a more profound stupefaction. At this crisis I came to his relief. "Dr. Dorsey, sir," said I, "*is Hagerstown!*" He has practiced medicine here for about sixty years." At this the Doctor revived a little; but I never saw him so silent as he was during the remaining hour of our ride. I think he was meditating upon the vanity of *fame*.

Permit me again to express my thanks to you for the address, and believe me that I retain a lively recollection of the author as well as of the subject of it.

Yours truly, W. W. LORD.

Extract from Dr. G. M. Toner's Letter dated.

WASHINGTON, D. C. *July 24th*, 1866.

"In many respects, this is the best sketch I ever read. It does your head and your heart credit."

WEST RIVER, *May 10*, 1859.

My Dear Judge: I thank you for sending me your address upon the life and character of the late Dr. Dorsey.

I confess that I felt some curiosity to know what could be said on the *apparently* uninviting and purely local

subject of the life of a country or provincial physician, but am happy to say that you have invested it with a peculiar interest. I have read the address carefully and most sincerely congratulate you on the ability and eloquence with which you have discharged what was obviously a grateful and friendly duty. Dr. Dorsey was evidently not of "the common roll of men." Happy in his life and death, he has been not less fortunate in his eulogist. If I may be permitted, without incurring the imputation of flattery, (which I *detest*,) I would say that the address abounds with many philosophic reflections and observations well worthy of attention.

Truly your friend,

GEO. W. HUGHES.

HON. JOHN THOMSON MASON, *Baltimore.*

From Prof. Dunbar, M. D.

BALTIMORE, *May 18, 1859.*

HON. JOHN THOMSON MASON.

My Dear Judge: I gratefully acknowledge the reception of your address on the *life and character of Dr. Frederick Dorsey*. I have read it with deep interest, and feel obliged as a member of the same profession for the tribute to a worthy soldier in the cause of humanity and for the justice you have done to the profession of which he was so prominent a member. His character was familiar to me from my childhood, when I lived in Virginia, but I was not apprized until I read your address of the immense amount of labor which he performed, and of the valuable service he rendered to his fellow-men. Dr. Dorsey was blessed in having the confidence and the affection of the community among whom he practiced, which will reward the physician for the life of self-denial inseparable from the very nature of his profession. Such services will assuredly meet their reward, if not in this world they will be in the approving smile of heaven. But I consider it fortunate for Dr. Dorsey's memory and for the character of his profession, that his biographer was one who had the head and heart to do ample justice to his subject, and in the

name of the profession I return you our thanks; and there appears a peculiar propriety in this act of justice and proper tribute coming from a distinguished member of a sister profession, which is the more to be valued because it is not so frequent that we receive such treatment from our legal brethren. This should not be so, for we should each in our appropriate spheres, do our duty in our noble professions in doing good to our fellow men. I am, sir, very truly, your friend,

J. R. W. DUNBAR.

From B. F. Yoe, Esq.

BALTIMORE, *March* 31, 1859.

My Dear Sir: My wife has just finished reading your admirable address on the life and character of Dr. Dorsey, and desires me to say to you that it afforded her very great satisfaction. She says that you may refer to her for the truth of most of the remarkable traits of character you have so graphically portrayed, and which the incredulous, who did not know him, might doubt. There are many facts stated which she knows nothing about, as she says they happened before her time, but believes that they are in strict accordance with the truth. I need not tell you that I entirely concur in the opinion of one whose judgment and taste I so much admire.

Very respectfully, yours, &c.,

B. F. YOE.

HON. J. T. MASON.

NORFOLK, *May* 13, 1859.

My Dear Sir: I thank you for your admirable tribute to the memory of Dr. Dorsey.

One remark you made of Dr. D. struck me forcibly. It was his decision that a supposed consumption of the lungs was a bilious affection; or, in other words, a disease of the liver. I knew a similar case that baffled our best physicians.

I have merely dipped as yet into this excellent memoir.

Very truly, yours,

HUGH B. GRIGSBY.

EASTON, *June*, 1860.

My Dear Sir: I am desirous to embrace in my necrological report (for the American Medical Association in June next) some sketch of the late Dr. Dorsey of Washington County. You pronounced, I am informed, an admirable discourse on his life, &c., which was printed, and should you have a copy to spare, I would be very grateful for it. * * * *

I have received your most excellent and interesting address. * * It was fully drawn upon in my necrological report, which will appear as a part of the printed volume of the transactions of "the American Medical Association." * * *

Yours, very truly, &c.,

CHRIST. C. COX.

The late Judge George Chambers, of Pennsylvania, said: "There has been such a great desire, among the people of Chambersburgh, to read your address, that my copy has become so completely *thumbed* as to be no longer legible."

NEW YORK, *June*, 1859.

* * * *

I do not mean to flatter you, nor do I care to compliment your effort upon the life and character of old Dr. Dorsey, but I must say I have rarely ever read a pamphlet with as much pleasure, and never one with more satisfaction. While I feel that I knew all about the old Doctor, I must confess to a more practical knowledge of him, his virtues and peculiarities, since I have read your address, than ever before. I can better identify him and them.

Old Dr. Francis, of this city, seventy-five years of age, and much like Dr. Dorsey, is delighted with it from reading a passage here and there, and says I must write to you for a copy for himself.

* * * *

M. B. MASON.

ADDRESS.

A STRANGER, were one present, might well ask, what has produced this occasion? Why has a whole community turned out to pay a tribute to the memory of a mere provincial physician?

It shall be my aim, my fellow-citizens, on this occasion, to answer these questions.

And here, in the outset, we may well comment upon the false impression that generally prevails, that true eminence in all professions is only to be found in our large cities. That they present a wider field for success than the country, there can be no doubt, and hence many of our best men are attracted to them; but that they are better calculated to develop real intellectual or moral greatness, I deny. And the reason is obvious. In cities, the minds and bodies of men of all orders and ranks, owing to their dependence upon each other, fall under what are termed the rules of society and general conventionalisms, (and frequently these rest upon unsound principles of morality and humanity,) beyond the circle of which they never think of adventuring. Upon young men especially this influence is most baneful, and where they fall under it, the result is they never rise to any degree of originality, but continue through life the mere slavish followers of other men's thoughts and actions. Without freedom of thought and

independence of action, no man can ever attain to true greatness. On the other hand, in the country, untrammelled by conventional laws, the mind is free to think, and the body to act, to the fullest extent of their capacity; and notwithstanding country men may sometimes incur the imputation from fashionable circles of boorishness, and lack the opportunities for culture which cities furnish, yet here in the country have been laid the foundations of all the great men that have risen to renown in our nation, with scarcely a single striking exception.

And in the same connection it may be remarked, how great an error pervades society in supposing that the success with which a man in this world performs the high functions for which he was designed, is evidenced by the extent and intensity of the applause which the world awards him? If mortals may venture to speculate upon this subject, and to appeal from popular judgment to the court above, we may look for a far different result before that great tribunal on the last day.

These reflections are especially applicable on this occasion.

It is well that the service or duty we are about to render should have been so long deferred. It will enable us to approach the subject freed from the sad feelings which are usually incident upon the death of friends, and to consider it in a more cheerful aspect. The occasion is by no means a gloomy one, but on the contrary, a few moments passed in reviewing the memory of an old familiar friend, should rather excite agreeable and cheerful impressions. Unless we mourn the course of nature—and to do so would be impious—there is nothing in the event we are called together to consider, which should excite emotions of sorrow. Threescore years and ten, is the limit fixed by both the inspired

word, as well as by nature, beyond which we cannot reasonably hope to attain in this life. If, then, life be a blessing, the surviving friends of those who have been permitted to enjoy an unusual share of it, should rejoice and not mourn when at last it is terminated. If length of days is a reward for a noble and virtuous life, why should we sorrow for those who have had this reward bestowed upon them? On the other hand, if life is to be regarded as a burthen, we should rejoice when friends die, and mourn only because they had not died earlier. But life is a blessing, and length of days is the reward of virtue and usefulness! and the truth of these propositions is abundantly illustrated in the history of him whose memory we design now to commemorate.

An old man has lain down from his labors and is asleep! Nothing imparts its influence with so much certainty and power as *repose—rest*. Let us enjoy the solitude of the forest when nature seems to slumber—when the leaves hang motionless around us, and the soothing music of joyous birds, the hum of the insect, the distant sound of industry, all bespeak peace, rest and harmony—let us contemplate the ocean in majestic repose, and it is from such scenes as these that our own turbulent passions and heaving bosoms are put to rest, and made to harmonize and sympathize with the scenes of peace and repose around us. So it is when those who have been “heavy laden” are at rest. The silent but potent influence of repose, whether seen in life or in death—in inanimate things or living beings, in the heavens or in the great deep—impresses all upon whom it falls, who are not insensible to the noblest impulses of the human heart, with sympathy and kindred emotions. Then, my hearers, turn to a man who, through more than eighty long years, has borne more than his share of the ills of life—one who has seen children and

friends, youth and manhood, depart—who, after a life of toil and economy, was still doomed to experience an old age of vexation and pain, and witness now this body at last asleep in death—this spirit reposing in eternity—and is there one present who does not rejoice that it is so?

I am not here on this occasion for the purpose of fulsome eulogy, but to endeavor to give a truthful and faithful portraiture of a departed and beloved fellow-citizen whose life and character, whatever may have been their defects, were such that the truth may be spoken without a blush.

In the ordinary signification of the term biography there is little to be said on this occasion. Dr. Frederick Dorsey was born in Anne Arundel Co., Maryland, in the year 1774. He was well educated, and in early life removed to Washington County, where he spent the remainder of his days in the active pursuit of his profession, and, died October, 1858, in the house in which he had lived since his marriage, at the advanced age of eighty-four years. He continued in active practice up to the hour of his last illness, a period of nearly seventy years, and, what is a most unprecedented circumstance, was associated in practice, at the time of his death, with his son and grand-son. He leaves behind him great-grand-children. Here biography has performed its duty, as far as mere dates and family circumstances are concerned. To the character, services, and peculiarities of the deceased will my subsequent remarks be directed.

Although the sphere in which he moved was limited, and the events of his life were not brilliant or remarkable, yet he lived in the most wonderful period in the world's history, whether viewed with reference to the discoveries of science or the developments of political anomalies. He had lived through the American Revo-

lution. He had watched the progress of the revolutionary and bloody history of France. He had beheld the brilliant yet terrible career of Napoleon. He had shaken hands with Washington, an event of itself sufficient to honor any grave; and such was his vivid recollection of the circumstance, that the impress of that grasp tingled upon his fingers to his last days. Jefferson was his idol. Rush was his friend and preceptor. Clay, Rochester, Pindall, the Fitzhughs, the Barnes, the Ringgolds, the Tilghmans, the Masons, the Lawrences, the Hughes, the Spriggs, the Carrolls, the Buchanans, the Kershners—all, all now gone, were his early, intimate friends. Suppose it were possible, and that it were appointed at a fixed hour and place, that all the friends and acquaintances, high and low, of Dr. Dorsey, who had gone before him to the grave, were to pass in procession as they were in the prime of life! What a spectacle to behold! Imagination cannot adequately depict it!

He had seen this lovely county, now so thickly settled, arise from a wild and uninhabited prairie. He had witnessed in succession the pack-horse give way for the common wagon—then the stage-coach, then the locomotive and the telegraph. The single footpath, which constituted the only highway to the West, he had seen yield to the county road, then the turnpike, and finally the rail road.

Contemplate the stupendous and sublime events which were crowded together in the life of one who, when he came first to *Elizabethtown** to settle, was penetrating the deepest recesses of our then civilized West, yet who lived to see emigration sweep onward, across the Alleghanies, through the Valley of the Mississippi, over the Rocky Mountains, only to be arrested by the waters of the Pacific!

*The original name of Hagerstown.

What a vacuum the death of this aged man has created in our community! The generation with whom he had commenced the pilgrimage of life, had passed away, and left him the companion of their children. Most of those with whom he mingled in later life had no traces of memory beyond him—he was associated with their earliest recollections. Many of them, indeed, had opened their eyes upon the world for the first time in his presence. Through childhood, manhood and age, their eyes have never been long removed from this old, familiar object, who has now at length been removed from them, and upon whom their eyes shall never rest again!

I suppose no man ever lived who was more thoroughly identified with a community than was Dr. Dorsey with this. Not only were our men and women familiar with him, but the beasts of the field, many of them, knew his familiar form; and, were it possible, even things inanimate had become accustomed to an object which had been so long and so constantly before them. The sturdy oaks of our forests, though venerated by us for their age and magnitude, are nevertheless his juniors. He witnessed their slow growth from the acorn, till they had justly merited the title of monarchs of the forest. How often, in later years, has he been refreshed amid their shades in summer, and protected by them against the rude blasts of winter! How often have our mountains, sometimes frowning in the storm, or again smiling in the sunshine, watched him in his solitary missions of mercy. For nearly seventy years the moon, the silent vigil of the night, had looked down from her bright abode in the heavens, upon one who, while others slept, still pursued his solitary course, in remote and unfrequented regions, imitating that glorious luminary in her untiring wanderings, and, like her, blessing the world with the

light of his love. Imitating the moon, did I say? far excelling her; for she for seasons withdraws her light and influence from the earth, and in storms and clouds hides her face, while he never departed from his orbit, nor turned his face from sorrow or disease!

But the oak will protect him no more from the sun and the storms! The mountain will never again see him climbing its cliffs or penetrating its dells! The moon will look in vain along the lonely by-paths and lanes for her old companion, who she has so often lighted on his way, and who always repaid her for her blessings, by a cheerfulness of spirits which made even darkness bright and solitude joyous.

The character and peculiarities of the deceased constitute a study!

There is no one particular trait of character, or train of exploits which, taken alone, entitles his memory to the special commemoration which we purpose to render on this occasion. Each of the many peculiarities and circumstances which combined to make up his life and character, is to be found possessed by many in as high a degree. It was the wonderful combination of virtues, gifts and eccentricities which has made the man pre-eminent. Benevolence is not an uncommon virtue, yet wherever it is found it is admired. The same may be said of truth, of fidelity, of friendship! We frequently meet with men of extraordinary memory. Whenever we do, they are objects of interest and fascination; for the treasures of memory are always appreciated. The same is true as regards cheerfulness of temper, buoyancy of spirits, and fine powers of conversation. Our State and County abound with men distinguished in their various professions. To all such we extend the full measure of praise and respect. Men of great physical powers and endurance are common among us, yet those

gifts are enviable possessions. So it may be said of courage, a benign countenance, and a noble personal appearance. Old men are met with everywhere, yet age is always venerable. But when all these qualities centre in one individual, they constitute a rare being, let his lot be cast where it may.

Nature seems to have designed Dr. Dorsey for the profession he adopted; and here, in his great success, we, who have children, are taught the lesson, that if we wish for them success in life, we should devote them to that pursuit or profession to which nature and their tastes seem to have designated them.

Professor Nathaniel Potter, whose authority no one can question, pronounced him as good, if not the best judge of the pulse he ever knew. A single touch of that mysterious fibre was for him sufficient to know whether it beat the cheerful notes of life, or the sad, muffled tolls of death. His predictions of life and death upon the sick bed were almost superhuman. He could fix with miraculous precision the last moment of a sinking patient, and in his own case, he foretold with as much calmness and precision as Wolsey had done of himself, the very moment when his spirit would take its flight.

In the department of midwifery, he was admitted by all persons to stand in the front rank of his profession. His experience and success in that particular branch of medical science were extraordinary. At the early age of seventeen, he first entered upon this particular field of practice, and before he died, he had officiated on upwards of *eleven thousand* occasions. A few years ago, he could claim nearly half the younger population of this county as the offspring of his professional skill. In a number of instances which I might name, he has been the accoucher of three generations. On one occasion, I remember to have seen a dancing party on the floor,

composed of sixteen persons, fourteen of whom he had introduced into this *dancing world*, while the two exceptions, married ladies and heads of families, had been his patients at delicate periods no less than thirteen times. Was it ever in the power of any other man to say the same? The confidence of the public in his skill in this particular, was as unbounded as it was merited.

In the last interview I ever had with this wonderful old man he disclosed one of the true secrets of his professional success. His first object was to secure the confidence of his patient. This done, the battle was half won. He never halted or seemed to doubt. He would fall into the whims or caprices of his patients, and would seem to adopt their own notions and suggestions so readily, that before they were aware, they had been led willing captives to his own theories. He never treated with contempt, as most physicians do, what are called old women's remedies or quack medicines. He had the sense and courage to adopt any remedy which experience and skill would sanction, however humble the source whence it came. Nor was he so much of a quack himself as to treat the understandings of his patients with contempt by withholding, as is the common usage among doctors, all information as to the course of practice he was pursuing. On the contrary, he would explain to the most humble, minutely, the theory and treatment of the case before him.

Dr. Dorsey was an admirable surgeon. He performed certain operations, to my knowledge, which would have been creditable to the most distinguished surgeon of the land, and of which, if the newspapers and medical journals had been as ready and as prompt to record as they have been in other less striking cases, his reputation would have been more wide-spread.

In Dorsey's Elements of Surgery, which I believe is a compilation of Dr. Physic's Practice and Lectures, honorable mention is made of an operation performed by our old friend. In the article upon trepanning and the treatment generally of hemorrhages of the arteries of the *dura mater*, the author says: "The middle artery of the *dura mater* was once tied with a needle and ligature by Dr. Frederick Dorsey of Maryland, and no ill consequences resulted." The gentleman, himself an eminent physician, to whom I am indebted for the above fact, adds: "I believe, as I told you, that this artery had never before, nor since, been ligatured, and the success of the operation proved the thorough skill of our venerable friend."

Another case I beg leave to refer to. Dr. Harrison, a leading physician and citizen of Martinsburg, Virginia, had suffered long and severely from *fistula*. Having been treated by some of the first surgeons of our own country without success, he went to Europe and placed himself in the care of Dr. Bell, of Edinburgh, than whom, at that time, no more eminent surgeon lived in any country. His treatment proving equally unsuccessful, and Dr. H. returned home in despair of ever recovering. Dr. Dorsey was finally consulted, and performed an operation which resulted in the complete restoration, at last, of his patient to health.

These facts occurred within my own recollection, and I can therefore vouch for the truth of them. They illustrated one of two things—first, that there is either little or no science in the medical profession, or, secondly, if there is, then Dr. Dorsey was certainly an eminently scientific physician.

In spite of his indifference to what the world thought of him, he was, at the time of his death, one of the most eminent physicians in our country, and I observed that

his demise was noted in terms of compliment, in almost all the papers from Maine to Texas.

He was a student, and continued through life a faithful disciple of Dr. Rush, the greatest physician, perhaps, that ever lived. The very general notion that prevailed among medical men in regard to Dr. Dorsey, that he was a blind adherent to old and exploded theories, is very erroneous. No man was more ready to adopt any real improvement in the science of medicine than he was. He was one of the very first men in our country who adopted etherization in cases of surgical operations, and even before it had been generally used in the cities. Contrary to the general belief, he read, too, the current medical literature of the day; but the great source whence he drew his knowledge was nature's fountain, *experience*, tested by his own sound judgment. Upon one subject he was, however, a true and unalterable Rushite. Calomel and blood-letting were with him the alpha and omega of the profession, and for one, I am far from doubting his correctness upon this point. I deny, however, that he used either rashly or imprudently, as has often been charged. In our old bilious fevers, he thought the one indispensable, while in pneumonic cases, he regarded the other equally so. In a conversation a short time ago with a very enlightened gentleman from the lower part of our State, he remarked upon the increased fatality attending pneumonic attacks, and attributed, I think correctly, the fact to the modern practice in excluding the use of the lancet. What a commentary does this single circumstance present upon the total instability of the science of medicine! For centuries the lancet had been the great weapon employed against this insidious enemy of the human family, and what was then regarded as the safeguard of human life, is now proclaimed by modern physicians as a practice

little short of murder. Like in the days of King James of Scotland, when more than five hundred human beings were put to death for the supposed commission of a crime (witchcraft) which the judgment of modern times has declared to be impossible.

Permit me to illustrate by a single case the wisdom of the old system. In 1850, Mr. Roderick Dorsey, the brother of the subject of these remarks, was taken down with a violent attack of pleurisy. Becoming alarmingly ill, his brother was sent for. Upon his arrival, the attending physician, a gentleman of reputation, was absent. The first step was to prepare for bleeding; but at this point, the family physician arrived, and vehemently remonstrated against the use of the lancet, giving as a reason that the pulse was then too low to bear it, and that the patient would sink under the operation. These remonstrances were disregarded,—Dr. Dorsey making the apparently paradoxical assertion that the pulse must first be restored by bleeding and then reduced. Sure enough, as the blood flowed the pulse rose, until it reached a point of fearful tension; then again it began to recede and soon reached a proper medium, not, however, until nearly a gallon of blood had been drawn. This patient got well. Could any one doubt that to this course of practice was due the life of this man?

Upon this point permit me to read an original letter from Doctor Rush to the deceased, dated about sixty years ago:

DEAR SIR,—Accept of my thanks for your long and interesting letter.

I am sorry to hear that you have met with malignant bilious fevers so early in the year. It indicates the continuance of a malignant constitution of our atmosphere, and portends a sickly autumn.

Fevers of great morbid action in pregnant women require *more* bleeding than in other people. You will find this remark confirmed by several facts in my defence of blood-letting. Had you bled your pregnant patient more freely, I am persuaded no symptoms of abortion would have ensued. I hope she has recovered. I never lost a woman in the yellow fever whom I bled liberally in a state of pregnancy, nor did abortion in a single case follow the use of that remedy.

I have no advice to give you respecting your epidemic, but to follow the dictates of your judgment and conscience in the treatment of it. Do not rely exclusively upon any one mode of depletion. Try them all according to circumstances. Remember that blood-letting holds the first rank in the list of depleting remedies, and that it should always be preferred, except in those cases in which the excitement of the system is prostrated *below* the point of reaction. Here emetics, purges and sweats, produce the most salutary effects. The lancet may sometimes be employed to succeed them with the greatest advantage.

Have you tried the *Bark* after the seventh day of your fever? I have lately given it in the decline of a bilious fever, after plentiful evacuation, with success.

With best wishes for your health and happiness, I am, dear sir, your friend and elder brother in the profession of medicine,

BENJ. RUSH.

PHILADELPHIA, 24th April, 1800.

How is it that now, where no blood is drawn, almost every case of yellow fever proves fatal, while, under the blood-letting system of Dr. Rush, he lost *none*?

Professor Potter, too, was a great phlebotomist. His direction to his students was, to bleed the patient in pneumonia till the blood would no longer stain a white handkerchief.

Notwithstanding Dr. Dorsey's great confidence in calomel, he once said to me, that if he were confined to the

use of a single medicine in his practice, he would select *antimony* or *tartar emetic*.

His skill and experience in diseases of children were no less remarkable. As illustrating his quick perception in detecting disease, I will mention an anecdote which came within my own knowledge. He was riding through the country on a certain occasion, when his attention was attracted by the cough of one of a number of children playing in the road. He recognized the fatal premonitor of croup. He rode up to the house where they belonged, and calling the mother to the door, very bluntly told her that her child had the croup and would die, unless at once relieved. The woman was disposed to ridicule the suggestion and to treat it as impertinent, because to all appearances the child was perfectly well. The next day, about the same hour, the doctor passed the same place. There were no children at play—all was silent. The sobs of grief had taken the place of merry childhood's laugh—the child was dead!

Most of my hearers well knew a gentleman formerly of this town, who was supposed to be in the last stages of consumption, and was so treated. He had been at Baltimore to consult eminent physicians, but had returned without hope. Dr. Dorsey saw him at last. His opinion was gruffly expressed in these brief words—"About a pound of calomel will cure you—your liver, and not your lungs, is diseased." And calomel did cure him, and he is still living to confirm what I have here stated.

Happening to be in Philadelphia, he was sent for to see his friend the late Mr. Savage, who was suffering with a severe fit of the gout. He inquired, and was told the treatment Mr. S. was undergoing by his Philadelphia physician, the eminent Prof. —, now no more. Looking over his spectacles with a mingled expression of

surprise and contempt, and repeating in slow and measured terms the prescription—"5 grains of sup. carb. soda every two hours;" he added, "here, take this to-night, 20 grains of calomel, and to-morrow morning 40 grains of jalap," which were to be followed by other medicines no less potent. Before the week had passed Mr. Savage was on the street, and being asked by a friend the cause of his rapid improvement, replied: "old Dorsey of Hagerstown took me through a threshing machine, and if that don't take the gout out of a man's bones, God knows what will." I might multiply examples on this point till the close of the evening."

In an earlier part of this address reference was made to the manner in which he secured and retained the confidence of his patients, by adopting their own delusions and whims. An amusing incident once occurred, among many similar ones, which illustrates the wisdom of this policy.

An hypochondriac was laboring under the insane delusion that he had swallowed a spider, which he imagined was destroying his very vitals, and he was accordingly suffering tortures. All efforts, by means of reasoning and ridicule, and the like, had failed to remove the terrible delusion. He sent for his physician. Comprehending the whole case at a glance, Dr. Dorsey at once fell in with the diseased humor of his patient's mind, pronounced the case a bad one, thought it quite possible he might extract the spider, and promptly made an arrangement to expel the ungracious tenant from the sick man's stomach. The great effort was to be made the following day, and accordingly at the appointed hour he was present. After great preparation and some pomp and parade, which were unusual for him, (but in all this he had an object,) the work

commenced. The patient's eyes were bandaged, all spectators excluded, the room darkened, and strict silence secured. The party was then directed to open his mouth as wide as his jaws would permit, and to remain immovably in that position. A string was then tied to a blue-bottled fly, which had been brought for the purpose, and it was made to pass repeatedly over the open mouth, all the time industriously buzzing. Occasionally the Doctor would break the silence, by half suppressed, but apparently involuntary expressions, loud enough to be heard, such as—"I see him!" "he is coming!" and the like. After considerable waiting, a sudden shout resounded through the house—"I've got him!" "I've got him!" The sick man sprang to his feet, the bandage torn from his eyes, and to his joy he saw his imaginary enemy a prisoner in the Doctor's hands. The delusion was perfect, and the invalid soon recovered, and for years this miraculous performance made the more ignorant neighbors wonder that there should be such wisdom and skill given to mortals on earth. The Doctor kept up the delusion, as well as he could, as long as the man lived, lest an exposure, as he thought, of this pious fraud might carry the imaginary spider back to his original hiding place. Afterwards, he used to tell the story with graphic effect and wonderful minuteness and detail.

It is a fact not generally known, that Dr. Dorsey was not a regular graduate of a medical college, though he had attended one or two courses of lectures. In after life, in 1824, the honorary degree of Doctor of Medicine was conferred upon him by the University of Maryland; and I hold in my hand, also, a letter from Dr. Jno. Redman Coxe, dated in 1804, accompanying a diploma of honorary membership of the Philadelphia Medical Society, of which, at the time of his death, he was the oldest honorary member.

The advantage, though a country physician, of a large practice was not denied Dr. Dorsey. At one period of his life, he had a more extensive practice, I suppose, than any man who ever lived; and I doubt if any man, even with the advantages of city hospitals, has attended the same number of patients. The extent of country over which he rode almost daily, would now appear incredible. In the early history of this county we were subject to most malignant bilious epidemics. At this period, he had almost the exclusive practice of this town and the adjacent country, for twenty miles around. He would often make a circuit of from 60 to 80 miles in twenty-four hours. On a single day, in his country practice, he visited and prescribed for as high as *one hundred and eighty-six* patients. On his *last birthday*, he rode on *horseback*, upwards of twenty-five miles. For upwards of forty days immediately preceding his mother's death, he saw her every day, notwithstanding she lived 6 miles below Frederick, a distance of 32 miles from Hagerstown, and attended to his other practice besides. During this very period, too, he had a patient in Chambersburg, 20 miles distant, whom he occasionally saw. It is not to be understood that he went to his mother's *and returned* every day. He remained with her every alternate night, by which means he saw her every day. Well and faithfully was the scriptural promise fulfilled in his case: "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land."

On a cold and inclement night he returned from a visit to a young man who was very ill, some seven miles in the country. His young friends gathered around the Doctor to know how he was. Their deep interest and sympathy, and the stories which they told illustrating his noble traits, so worked upon the old man, that notwithstanding he thought the labors of a long and wear-

some day were over, his conscience whispered and told him something more might yet be done for this young man, and without going into his house, he mounted a fresh horse and with a cheerful countenance paid another unexpected visit to his patient.

How many solitary midnight rides has he taken when often the darkness was so thick that he had to trust alone to his faithful horse for his safe guidance, proving how applicable were the following beautiful lines of Rogers:

“ When o’er the blasted heath the day declined,
And on the scath’d oak warr’d the winter wind ;
When not a distant taper’s twinkling ray
Gleamed o’er the furze to light him on his way,
When not a sheep-bell soothed his listening ear,
And the big rain drops told the tempest near ;
Then did his horse the homeward track descry,
The track that shunn’d his sad inquiring eye.”

The complaint was frequently made against Dr. Dorsey, and I believe with some justice, that he lacked professional courtesy. While professional courtesy may be very essential, it yet, in many cases, is carried to absurd and wicked lengths, even to the sacrifice of human life, and so he thought and acted.

But his characteristics as a man were even more striking than those of him as a physician. In this respect, he was indeed a strange compound of a vast deal of good, with much seeming evil. In one particular, he was different from almost every man I ever met with. Hypocrisy, is perhaps the most common, as it is the most insidious and dangerous of human vices; so far from its entering into his nature, he erred in the other extreme. He studied to make himself appear *worse* than he really was. To listen to some of the sentiments he would utter, you would suppose him a monster, while to witness his unobtrusive acts of benevolence and virtue, you would esteem him a model of goodness. I

have known him in apparent seriousness to advocate the burning of all Christian churches and the hanging of all Christian ministers. Yet who contributed more liberally and cheerfully to the support of both? He would denounce certain persons at one moment, and yet in the next, quietly heap upon them the most substantial benefits. You would hear him recommend the most cruel punishment to slaves, yet he was proverbially one of the kindest of masters. At the bedside of the dying and the dead, he would frequently manifest the greatest degree of indifference, if not of recklessness; yet few realized how deep and pure were the fountains of his sympathy for the suffering and bereaved!

Here it may be remarked, that the profession of medicine is by no means calculated to elevate the sensibilities and sympathies of the human heart. Constant familiarity with scenes of suffering and death, so far from having a softening influence, tend rather to deaden our finer feelings. Under this hardening influence, the deceased labored, for his whole life was passed in constant familiarity with scenes of human suffering, bereavement and death. War may exult in the number and richness of its spoil, yet could scarcely boast of a greater harvest of death than has been reaped under his eye, in walks of peace! The old man loaded down with years has surrendered the remnant of life into his hands. How often have his eyes witnessed the strength of manhood struggle against disease, and finally yield to its power! The young, with the dew of youth so fresh upon them, have faded and withered in his presence! He has seen the rosebuds of infancy torn from their parent stock and despoiled! But of all others, the most trying scenes to which humanity can be subjected, he was most familiar with, the struggles and pangs of the youthful mother in giving life to her first-born

infant. How often does this long wished for moment, one both of terror and of joy, prove when at length it arrives, the last sad chapter of hope and life!

Dr. Dorsey was especially familiar with the two periods of human life, in which all mankind are reduced to one common level, where "the rich and poor meet together"—I mean, the periods of our entrance into this world, and of our exit out of it. We all come into the world in the same condition of destitution, helplessness and misery. The first note of the human voice is the cry of distress, as if conscious of the perils and sufferings that await us. But even here the equality ceases, and thus early in the journey of life, the rich and the poor take their temporary leave of each other. The one pursues the ways of ease and plenty, the other the dark paths of toil and distress. Honor and applause await some, while others are doomed to insult and wrong. But the ways of life lead but to death, and whatever may be the station which men may fill in this world, and whatever may be their lot in life, whether they have graced it by virtue, or degraded it by vice, whether they may have passed obscurely through the world, or filled it with the glory of their deeds, yet, once more, the rich and the poor, the high and the lowly, must meet together on equal terms, "for the Lord is the maker of them all," and hand in hand must pass the portals of the gate of death "into the blind cave of eternal night."

Notwithstanding such lessons of philosophy and religion, and the excellent natural traits of his character, it would be a great violation of truth to say that Dr. Dorsey had lived a pious life, or that he had even pious tendencies, if we are to judge of a man in this respect by his outward conduct, or if we view piety as men generally understand it. He was, however, a firm believer,

and a profound respecer of religion and of all things appertaining to it.

To omit to mention his fondness for amusements of all kinds, especially, for what, in former times, were called the manly sports of horse-racing, fox-hunting and chicken-fighting,—amusements in which many of our ablest and purest men, in the earlier and better days of our State, freely indulged, would be to falsify the history of the man. This passion continued with him through his whole life, though he never was a gambler. After he was sixty years of age he went all the way to New York to attend a main of cocks, and who does not remember his graphic account of that memorable visit? No friend present can object to a reference to this peculiarity, for he made no secret of it himself. He would talk as freely about the merits of this sport to ministers of the gospel, and even to his own pastor, as he would to any of us. He would often economise his time and movements; so that he could make the same visit from home subserve both an Episcopal Convention and a chicken-fight. I shall never forget an anecdote to which I was a party. We were members of the same vestry. I was seated in my office on a bright May morning, when he came to the door, and placing his hands against either side, and with a countenance beaming with as much light as glowed from the sun itself, he announced to me that at 10 o'clock the vestry would meet on important business, and that I must be sure to attend; but, he added, as we have half an hour to spare, suppose we first go up to see a little cock-fight that is to take place at C——'s.

Here it is due that I should add, that it is the theory of this church that the vestry has only to do with the temporal affairs of the Church, and not with the spiritual. How well he discharged his duty in this respect, I shall speak hereafter.

I once knew him to argue a clergyman of my acquaintance into the belief that there was no particular impropriety in chicken-fighting, and did actually prevail upon him to consent to witness for himself an exhibition of the kind. The gentleman was delighted with the performance, which turned out only to be a *sparring match*, with *muffs* instead of gaffs. The unsophisticated gentleman was afterwards induced to repeat his attendance on a similar occasion, as I have been informed, but can't vouch the truth, but this time, to his great horror, but to the great amusement of the old Doctor, the cold steel was used.

But great as was his fondness for all kinds of sport, he was never known to neglect a duty to his fellow-man to indulge in them. He would deny himself sleep and food, in order to attend a horse-race or a chicken-fight; but never to do so did he withhold from a patient any service in his power. He would yield the allurements of pleasure for the calls of duty, with cheerful alacrity.

The true explanation of these peculiarities is to be found in the natural vivacity of his temper and spirits, rather than in any obliquity of the moral sense. It led him into all kinds of amusements, and, I might add, boyish mischief, and even occasional excesses. No clouds of adversity or sorrow could long obscure the genial sunshine of his jovial heart. To the end of his days, this inestimable blessing, cheerfulness, never forsook him. Notwithstanding his limbs tottered with the weight of accumulated years, his heart still glowed with the fires of youth. Up to his last sickness, he continued in the full possession of the tastes, the appetites, the spirits and capacities of a boy. His long life was one unbroken season of youthful enjoyment and sunshine. He never became an old man, except in the veneration and love of his fellow-citizens, until he laid down at last

to arise no more. His beaming and cheerful countenance carried the light of hope and gladness into every sick-room into which it entered, and was often more salutary than medicine. Many have been the clouds of sorrow and distress which have been dispelled from the languishing bed of suffering, by the joyous sunshine of his presence alone.

Our duty, as religious beings, is two-fold—our duty to God, and our duty to our fellow-man. We have referred to what may be regarded as the short-comings of the deceased in his obligations under the first branch of his Christian duty; as respects the second, no man ever performed with more scrupulous fidelity than he did the obligations appertaining to it. In all the various walks of life, he was never known, when a fellow-being needed his aid, to ask “and who is my neighbor?” nor, “when he saw him, to pass on the other side.” As a physician, the deceased responded with as much promptness to the calls of the poor as to those of the rich. Without a murmur he would rise from his bed of repose in all hours of the night and in all weather, and visit the most remote part of the county to see a patient from whom he would never expect to be paid a cent. He would visit alike the cottage of the poor and the mansion of the great, and often he would be made by Providence unwittingly the author of relief and joy, as is illustrated by the following incident:

On one occasion, while returning from a professional visit at an unusual distance from home, he was overtaken by the darkness of the night, and, as was most uncommon for him, he became bewildered, and finally lost his way. After wandering for some time along the foot of our South Mountain, chilled and wearied, he at length discovered a distant light. It was to him a beacon of joy. Far otherwise was it to the inmates of

the house from which the light emanated. It was to them the signal of sorrow and distress. He soon approached the rude and solitary tenement, and applied for admission. He found a woman the only inmate, save two little affrighted children, who were nestling closely to their suffering mother. She was in the bitter pangs of child-birth, and a single room constituted the whole capacity of this humble mansion. She attempted some remonstrance against the admission of a stranger under circumstances so painful and delicate. He forgot his own sufferings, in those of the poor woman. In answer to the inquiry as to where her husband was, she stated that he had gone to Hagerstown "for old Doctor Dorsey," and added, in a tone of despair, "but before they return I shall be dead;" her countenance showing that she felt what Martha uttered, "if thou hadst been here he had not died." When the Doctor disclosed himself, there followed a scene which no artist's pencil could depict! The suffering invalid was soon relieved, and as the morning sun took the place of the clouds and darkness of the night, so, in this house, did joy and gladness follow sorrow and despair.

Many years ago, when I was a small child, there stood upon the banks of the Conococheague, a neat but humble cottage, which was the habitation of a solitary and respectable widow. Not a vestige of it now remains, and its inmate has long since gone to her rest. One dark and gloomy afternoon in November, about the year 1821 or '2, a single horseman was seen to approach this secluded spot. As he drew nigh he was recognized as Dr. Dorsey. As no one was sick at the time in the neighborhood, his appearance was unexpected and excited surprise, as it was not his practice to make mere social or formal visits. He entered the house, and for him, made an unusually long stay. To this day there

hangs around that visit a melancholy mystery—there was imparted, on that occasion, a sad secret, which never was revealed by him who gave or by her who received it. Its purport, however, may in part be imagined by what followed.

A few days after, the family carriage of the good physician might have been seen wending the same road, and at last stopping at the same cottage. The Doctor alighted, and was followed by a young, well dressed woman, having the air and mien of a lady, and possessing also great personal beauty. They entered the house together, and after a brief sojourn the Doctor returned alone to his carriage and drove off.

What heart can fully appreciate, or what imagination can picture the weight of sorrow and shame that oppressed the soul of that voluntary exile in her lonely prison!

Days and weeks elapsed. The Doctor was regular in his visits. The curiosity of the neighborhood was excited, but every effort to gain information in regard to the mystery was unavailing. At last the same carriage drove to the door, and the persons that came in it re-entered and took their departure. But now another had been added to the party. An unconscious, helpless infant made the third, and though innocent before God and man, and without the stain of any sin, was yet fleeing and hiding from shame and the scorn of the world.

Who this unhappy woman was, whence she came, or whither she went, no one in our county, save her one friend, ever knew. The impression, however, always was, that at Hagerstown they separated—the mother going to Virginia, the infant to Pennsylvania.

The work of the physician was no better performed in this instance, than was that of the philanthropist and diplomatist.

About the time I grew to manhood, in the year 1836 or '7, I made a visit with a companion, long since

departed, to a number of our college friends in different sections in Virginia. In our perambulations we were introduced into a most interesting family, which made more than an ordinary impression. The lady of this hospitable mansion carried with her a serene but melancholy air of dignity. She seemed always pensive and sad, yet withal there was a cheerful contentment in her deportment and countenance. She had a family of young and lovely children. Her husband was as tender and attentive as possible, yet without ostentation. Beside their own children there was another inmate of the family—a handsome boy, about sixteen years of age. He was stated to be the son of relatives who had lived in Pennsylvania, and that his parents having died in destitute circumstances, when he was but an infant, he had been adopted as one of their own children. The looks, the words, the intercourse which this boy received, were those which parental tenderness could only give. Besides it was intimated that there was a mystery attending his history which had never been satisfactorily cleared up—no suspicions, however, were ever hinted even, not consistent with the outward face of things in that family, but for myself, I confess that before I left this house my mind had irresistibly and involuntarily turned to the solitary cottage on the banks of the Conococheague, and now, whenever I revert to this long buried romance in real life, how sure I feel that the part taken by our good old friend in it, has secured for him a pearl of priceless value in the crown which he wears in the eternal world.

Nor were his good deeds confined to his profession. He was ever ready cheerfully to respond to any demand upon his charity or friendship. As a husband and father he was most devoted. To his eye every womanly charm and virtue were concentrated in his wife, and she

in turn adored him as the perfection of all that a man should be. The strict fidelity and beautiful devotion and affection which marked the entire period of their long protracted married life, are worthy of all admiration and imitation. Though his wife survived him, she ceased from his demise to care for the world, and death, which soon followed, was hailed with joy as the occasion by which she was to be reunited to her husband in an endless existence.

He was a steady, though an unostentatious friend. He perhaps lost more money by securityship and long indulgence, than any man who ever lived in our county. Had he been like most men, he might have died possessed of great wealth, but so far from it he died comparatively poor. If he was a leader on all occasions of sport and amusement, he was no less conspicuous in every noble and charitable enterprise. He was for years the main support of his church in this town. Had it not been for him, on many occasions they would have been a broken and scattered people without a head. He has literally kept the congregation together, and if scenes like those through which they have passed should arise again to test the vitality of the church, who of us will not miss the services of its valued friend? He was a member of the vestry, I suppose, for half a century, and although strong efforts at times were made to defeat him, he always proved invincible. For this office I believe he could have beaten General Jackson. How well he discharged his duty in this respect, the memory of those little soiled, ancient looking paper visitants, *pew bills*, which haunted, night and day, delinquent church subscribers, will fully attest. In the vestry he was President, Secretary, Treasurer, Collector, and, I believe, every thing else. I have known him to make the fires and ring the bell himself. He was head man at all

church weddings and funerals, and while I have never known him to officiate on these occasions, or to attempt to preach, yet I have seen him baptize children *in extremis mortuis*, with water and the cross.

At one period the Church was very much divided between the High and Low Church parties. As is unhappily too often the case, the contest assumed a bitter and personal character. The question at last came to an issue in the choice of a vestry. Never was a contest carried on with more spirit and activity. Dr. Dorsey led the High Church party, while the other side was supported by some of the most respectable and influential citizens of the town. He scoured the town and country around for voters, and literally resurrectionized Episcopal families that had been dead to the Church for years. Old men and young, many of whom had never been inside of the church, were duly registered upon the force of their ancestral or baptismal connection with Episcopacy, and on the day of election turned out, a motley crowd, to vote, not for an ecclesiastical principle, but for "old Dorsey." The High Church party were victorious, and the rejoicing that followed partook more of the character of a political triumph than that of a solemn, sacred religious principle. When the result was announced the Doctor took off his hat and gave three cheers, in which he was vociferously joined by his enthusiastic supporters.

The question which was involved in this unique contest was nevertheless finally settled by the result, for I am not aware that it has ever been since renewed.

I have never known an instance before of a man, not influenced by pious zeal or religious enthusiasm, who yet devoted himself so steadily and faithfully to the interests of his Church for upwards of half a century. May we not hopefully affirm, that in the religious advantages

of his last illness, and his peaceful and happy death, we witnessed the fruits of this pious peculiarity?

Of St. James' College he was a firm, untiring friend and patron, and by those connected with that valuable institution he will be long remembered and regretted. He was one of its trustees from its first organization, and among the earliest and most liberal contributors to this great and successful educational enterprise.

It will be conceded that in all his business transactions he was as honest as steel. In his habits he was plain, unaffected and economical. Indeed, the simplicity of his dress and manners was unique. He would boast of having worn certain articles of clothing for many years, the truth of which was abundantly attested in their antique appearance. He has often shown me a pair of shoes which he said he had worn for fourteen years, and they carried upon their *complexion* and in their *soles* evidence that one of them might well have been the identical shoe which the Psalmist had in his mind when he said: "Over Edom will I cast out my shoe."

Hospitality was one of his shining virtues. A plate, a bed, a cordial welcome and a long talk, were always ready for his friends. He was devoted to society, and was a great talker. He would talk to any one who would listen, and often his *horse* would constitute his only auditor. In conversational conflicts few persons could stand up before him. He abounded in narratives and anecdotes. An excellent friend of his, now no more, used to say of him, that he had an assortment of stories on hand for every occasion, and that they varied from *one to twenty miles* in length, to suit his different rides and companions.

He was equal to every occasion, and was at home in all society. He would attend the death bed or funeral of a patient in the morning, participate in regulating the

temporal affairs of his Church at noon, attend a race or cock-fight in the evening, and dance at a wedding at night. He could be as elegant and agreeable in a refined company as any one, and could make himself equally at home in low society. From the fashionable and refined dinner table he could readily translate himself to a corn-husking, and would hardly seem to realize that the flavor of old Madeira and savory viands had been exchanged for hard cider, pork and beans; and often he would so blend two different occasions, either by his manner or dress, that one could hardly discover, so far as he was concerned, the precise line of separation between them. For example, on an occasion of a gay wedding to which the Doctor was invited and expected, he was late in making his appearance, as was not unusual. The company, however, were soon cheered by his welcome approach, but to the great surprise of all, to the horror of the superstitious, and amusement of others, he entered the house with a long black scarf streaming from his hat. He had just returned from a funeral, and in his haste to be present at the wedding, he had forgotten to exchange the habiliments of woe for those of joy—thus forcibly illustrating, by the circumstance, that if there is but one step from the house of feasting to the house of mourning, so sometimes there is but a single step from the latter to the former.

On another occasion he was one of a party at a wedding dinner. The company at first were dull and dry, and the Doctor was forced, perhaps not against his will, to do the greater part of the talking. He at last carelessly put his hand in his coat pocket to draw out his handkerchief, when instead thereof he drew forth to the astonished gaze of the party, *an infant's cap*. Some blushed, others hid their faces, while others roared with laughter. The Doctor himself made many apologies,

and tried hard to blush, and notwithstanding he protested it was an accident, and that he was to attend the christening of an infant the same day, and for whom the cap was a present from his wife, he stood convicted by a majority of those present of the deliberate perpetration of not an unmeaning practical joke or prophecy.

No man was fonder of good eating, yet no one was oftener required to put up with what was bad, or who had his appetite subjected to severer tests. On one occasion, after a hard ride, he was invited to partake of a homely meal. His over-kind hostess discovering that his knife was not as clean as it might have been, deliberately, in his presence, *licked it*, that she might wipe it cleaner.

But once his stomach did quail. He had tapped a woman with dropsy and measured the water drawn from her in a pint bowl furnished for the purpose. After he had finished the operation, he was asked to supper. About to refresh himself with a drink of the milk set before him, to his horror he discovered it was contained in the identical vessel with which he had a few moments before been made so familiar, under such different circumstances.

Many years ago a gentleman from Virginia made us, as he frequently did, a visit. He had met Dr. Dorsey often at Montpelier, but did not know him intimately. Among the first remarks he made upon his arrival, was that our old physician was a queer man. "Why," said he, "I met him to-day below Sharpsburg with a bag swung across his horse, balanced with a game cock in one end and a jug in the other." Upon being asked what it meant, the Doctor responded, "only a jug of gruel prepared by my wife for one of my poor patients; and as for the cock, I intend to stop at Sharpsburg as I return, where I expect to meet Harrison from Martinsburg, and

we are to have a round. I shall whip him certainly," he continued, "as I never had one of my brass-backs whipped in a fair fight."

Some time after, my mother, alluding to the incident, jocosely asked him the result of the fight. He laconically responded, with a triumphant smile, "I whipped him in three flies."

I have often recurred to this unimportant and apparently valueless incident as peculiarly illustrative of the character of our deceased friend. Benevolence and fidelity on the one side, and sport and courage on the other, constituted the moieties of his character—the first were well represented by the homely jug of gruel, the others by his gallant "brass-back." He must first obey the demands of charity and discharge the obligations of his profession, then, but not till then, he follows the alluring calls of pleasure, and pursues his favorite "manly sport."

I remember once that our household was thrown into great alarm in the night by loud shouting, barking of dogs and blowing of horns. My mother calmed our fears by assuring us it was only Dr. Dorsey going out to *take a fox hunt*. For several hours during the early part of the day, he might have been seen coursing through the fields in hot pursuit of the fox and hounds. That night he slept at Caspar Snively's, in the lower part of Pleasant Valley, a distance of at least forty miles. Imagine a man, with such a ride before him, yet *refreshing* himself before undertaking it, with a fox-hunt of several hours' duration.

On one occasion, for *nine* days and nights, so pressing were his professional engagements, that he never went to bed. On the *tenth* he presided, as Chief Judge, at the great race between the famous horses Industry and Bachelor, and was the merriest man on the ground.

An erroneous impression very generally prevails in this community respecting Dr. Dorsey, and that is, that he indulged in extravagant and unfounded narrative. Nothing can be further from the fact. He was a most truthful man. I never knew one more so, whether in word or in act. What is truth? To say that it is to repeat facts as they occurred, would be to convey a most meagre idea of the term. The most correct and appropriate definition of truth is, *fidelity to obligation*. That man, then, is the most truthful who conforms, in his walk and conversation, most strictly to his obligations to his fellow-men. Who filled this standard better than Dr. Dorsey?

The erroneous impression to which I have alluded was owing, in a great degree, to his extraordinary memory. He could remember and narrate, with perfect accuracy, every thing that ever occurred in his life. Who of my hearers can do the same? If any of you could repeat every thing that had come under your observation during life, you would have much to tell that might excite incredulity. Why, then, should the well collated circumstances of a long and eventful life cause surprise? And does it not occur to those who make this objection, that it is quite as easy to remember events that really did occur, as it is to repeat accurately a story wholly fictitious? For it is remarkable, that the narratives of the old Doctor, though often repeated, were always precisely the same. I repeat, it was the result of a strong and accurate memory. He could carry you back to the last century. Every incident of his school and college life could be repeated. He remembered every incident connected with the great Jefferson Barbecue in 1800. He could almost tell how many chickens, turkeys and the like each person contributed on that occasion. To me he has repeatedly described the very color and

appearance of the beef that was given by Col. Barnes at Montpelier, and even the identical field out of which it was driven. He knew the history of every man and woman almost in the county, and who, in reference to them, ever detected him in an error? A man of our day would scarcely credit an account of a procession of pack-horses passing through Hagerstown, laden with merchandise for the only West then known. Yet Dr. Dorsey has seen this. Who would not receive with incredulity his comico-tragic account of the scenes connected with the execution of the Cottrells, some forty years ago? How he came possessed of one of their bodies for dissection—how he rode at night from point to point to avoid pursuit, with the dead body beside him on the horse, the grim corpse at one moment sitting up erect behind him, and then again dangling down before him like a bag of meal! how it tumbled off, and how he struggled to get it back again! Yet there are men probably here to-night who know this story to be literally true. It almost sounds marvelous that he should have administered more than 200 grains of calomel to himself in less than twelve hours, when he had the cholera in 1832. Yet no fact is better established. To modern physicians it would seem impossible that he should have ridden on horseback, in a single week, more than five hundred miles. There are men living who might safely swear to the truth of this assertion. I have known him myself to ride from Baltimore to Hagerstown with the same horse in a single day, a distance of upwards of seventy miles, and on the same night to visit, besides, patients in the country. With a horse-race or chicken-fight in contemplation, he would ride from twenty to thirty miles before breakfast. On one of his early rounds on such an occasion, he met at Montpelier the late Rev. Mr. Ryan, a most holy and

pure man. He had spent the night with us in discharge of his Christian duties, and was preparing to return to Hagerstown. At the breakfast table, Dr. Dorsey so fascinated him with accounts of the delights and innocence of horse-racing, and so earnestly pressed him to join him in his contemplated visit, that the good old priest at last so far consented as to agree to witness the race from the turnpike. I shall never forget these two good old physicians, one of the soul and the other of the body, jogging off together on so extraordinary a mission; nor have I ever yet been able to bring myself to believe that either was any the worse for it?

A few years ago I opened, in the office of a gentleman of this place, an essay on the life of the late Dr. Alexander, of Princeton, which I read with great interest, as it portrayed the life and character of one of the best and greatest men who has ever adorned the annals of America. An account was given of an interview which took place sometime about the beginning of the present century, between Dr. Alexander, as he was returning from Virginia, and a lady at Sharpsburg, in this county, named Mrs. Orndorff, who was supposed to be in a *trance*. A minute and curious account is given of the interview and of the peculiarities of the case. I had never heard of it before. Here, thought I, is an opportunity of testing the memory of Dr. Dorsey. I met him soon after on the street, and by the simple query, "Did you ever hear of Mrs. Orndorff, who was in a trance?" I afforded him a text for a narrative of more than an hour long. It is sufficient for this occasion to say, that his representations precisely corresponded with those of the biographer of Dr. Alexander, only that in addition he gave a minute account of the previous and subsequent history of this remarkable woman, and told me even precisely where she was buried, a fact which few persons, I suppose, now care much about knowing.

It is true there was a class of parabolical stories he used to indulge in, which, from their extravagant character, it is plain, he never intended any one should believe. They were told, I presume, to enforce some particular point he wished to establish. For example, he once had a very fleet horse, and to illustrate his pre-eminence in this respect, he used to tell, in sober seriousness, the following story: On one occasion, he said, soon after leaving Clear Spring, a summer's rain storm came upon him. He put whip to his horse, and although the cloud had so far overtaken him that the rain was already falling upon the hinder part of his horse, yet such was the speed he was going, the rain could not get up to the saddle, and in this way the contest was waged for six long miles, neither party gaining or losing an inch, and not until he remembered that to keep dry he would not only have to beat the storm but he would have to reach home sufficiently in advance of it to enable both himself and his horse to secure shelter, did he ply whip and spur afresh, and thus he soon distanced and put to shame his celestial competitor.

Again, he has often seriously affirmed that he was at one time so annoyed by the depredations of black birds that he was compelled to resort to poison to destroy them, which he did by soaking wheat with arsenic and scattering it over his fields. A stream passed through the farm, and the poor poisoned birds rushed to it in such numbers to quench their dreadful thirst, and in fact to meet their instant death, that upon visiting his farm the following day he found, to his surprise and dismay, that the number of dead birds was so great that they had completely choked up the stream, and for at least a quarter of a mile back his farm was submerged in water, thus injuring his property more than the poor birds had done when living.

To illustrate the severity of a case of small-pox that came within his practice, he stated that the patient, who was a stranger, was removed from Hagerstown to a temporary hut erected for the purpose under a large elm tree near town, and so malignant was the disease that in a few days the tree was actually covered with loathsome ulcers, giving every indication that it had contracted the dreadful malady.

He used also seriously to affirm that of all bed-covering snow was the warmest. To prove this he stated that on a very cold winter's night he found himself in the mountains, a great distance from home, and that he had to spend the night with his patient in the loft of a comfortless cabin. The bed covering was so thin that he at first thought he would freeze, but sleep, the friend who never deserted him, soon came to his relief, and caused him to forget his sufferings. When he awoke, to his surprise he found himself as warm and comfortable as if he had been in his own bed, and upon examining into the cause of the great change in the condition of things, he found that during the night a driving snow storm had covered his bed about six inches with fresh snow.

It sometimes happened also, that he would be detected in contradictions in some unimportant point in some of his long stories, and some examples of a ludicrous character might be furnished. They never, however, disconcerted the narrator, who always managed to get out of them with perfect self-possession. He once was describing to me a very large and gay party at General Spriggs'. The moon was bright, the sleighing superb, and the number of sleighs was legion. After relating many of the minute incidents of the party, he continued that he then asked Mrs. — to take his arm and they walked into the garden, where "we picked some fine ripe strawberries." "Why," said I with more frankness than

politeness, "I thought you said there was snow on the ground?" He immediately replied, without any discomfiture, "you are right; I was thinking of Spriggs' wedding, which took place forty-five years ago; that was in strawberry time;" and he coolly continued his narrative to its close as if there had been no interruption.

At another time he was relating to a friend an adventure he had with a robber on one of his solitary rides. He set out by representing the darkness of the night as terrible. After proceeding with his story at length, he said he discovered, concealed behind a tree, at some distance, a suspicious looking object. His friend, interposing, asked how he could see such a distance? "Why," said the Doctor, "the moon was shining as bright as day." "But you have just stated," the response was, "that the night was very dark." "Bless me," said he, "I have got two stories mixed. But, never mind, I will tell you the other story also, as soon I get through with this."

Notwithstanding these anecdotes, no man ever possessed in a higher degree than he did all the substantial elements of truth. His face, his step, his grasp, his address, no less than his tongue, and his whole life, certified him a man of truth, candor, and simplicity of heart.

I might multiply these illustrations to an indefinite extent, but I am admonished not to detain my indulgent hearers longer.

However agreeable may have been the incidents of this old man's life, his death was even more so. As all things but God and eternity have an end, so the life of this extraordinary man at length approaches its close. In the midst of the same cheerfulness which had always characterized his life, he receives the summons to be ready. He resignedly takes his bed, from which he knew he never would arise. The time for the settlement

of his great account is at hand. The shades of the evening of life are gathering around him. He feels that he is walking upon the solemn, silent shores of the Ocean of Eternity, about to embark upon its uncertain waters. And here let us pause and contemplate the great mercy and forbearance of our Father in Heaven, as illustrated in the death which is now approaching. The fidelity with which he had discharged every duty to his neighbor, seemed to disarm his great and good master of all resentments for any wrongs done to him. Sins against his awful majesty he is ever ready to pardon upon the mere penitent asking, but he is slower to overlook wrongs against our fellows. He is even more mindful of the rights of his creatures than of his own. Insults against him fall harmless at his feet, for he is beyond the reach of the tongue or deeds of men, but unhappily our neighbors are not. If we may venture to allude even to a subject so sacred and awful, we might well conjecture what would be the settlement of this last account. Whatever may have been his delinquencies as respects his great master, his account with his fellow-man showed a clear balance-sheet. How different would it have been had the reverse been true. How different is the death-bed of him who, though he appears, and may in fact have performed all the obligations peculiarly due to God, but yet disregarded his duties to his neighbor? And how many canting Christians are there of this class?

Death now draws nearer, an enemy with which he has so often combatted in his assaults upon others! Time makes no inroad upon Death's vigor or power. He is the same inexorable, unchanging foe. He meets now an easy victim in an old, enfeebled man. To an unconverted man the occasion is one of gloom, if not of despair, for it is an awful thing to appear before an offended God. But his good deeds are remembered and his faults for-

gotten, and "suddenly there shined around about him a light from heaven." The heavy tread of Death is arrested long enough to enable the dying man to ask trembling and astonished, "Lord, what will thou have me to do?" Then follows the triumphant announcement from this bed of death, "behold he prayeth;" and finally, as the scenes of life close, the final judgment is announced, bearing upon its wings peace to the dying, consolation and joy to the living: "Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me."

And now, my fellow-citizens, in ending my task, and in describing the last scene in the life which I have so imperfectly attempted to delineate, permit me to use the appropriate language of Queen Catherine's usher, in announcing to her the death of her favorite Wolsey:

—— "Full of repentance,
Continual meditations, tears and sorrows,
He gave his honors to the world again,
His blessed part to heaven, and slept in peace."

The name of old Dr. Dorsey will long suggest to those who knew him a train of solemn, yet pleasant memories and emotions, and the coming generations of our people will indulge a pious curiosity in looking at the house where he dwelt, and in listening to descriptions of the person, and anecdotes of the virtues and peculiarities of one, who belonged to a period and a generation which he had stamped with his impress, but which have passed away forever.

Bound June 4, 1918

Mason, John, *The country physician*

Condition when received: The book was rebound in a cloth case. The new front fly page was detached. The original back fly page (canary yellow) was torn at the foreedge.

Conservation treatment: Detached page and edge tear were mended using layered tosa tengujo Japanese paper and secured with wheat starch paste (zin shofu, BookMakers).

Conservation carried out by Rachel-Ray Cleveland
NLM Paper Conservator, 7/2005

